

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.  
Let them rest from their labors; for their  
works follow them." Apoc. 14:13

The enduring memorial for our deceased loved ones rests on the promise of Jesus Christ. Indeed, an occasion of this kind makes me realize the value of our Faith and the reward held out for those who are faithful unto Death. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life." (Apoc. 2:10)

The yearning of the human heart to live on will find fulfillment in everlasting life. This is immortality, the triumphant jubilee note that rings out from Holy Writ: "For I know my Redeemer liveth...and in my flesh I shall see my God." (Job 19:25, 26)

These thoughts and hopes stir within me as we gather to salute a beloved friend who has passed from our vision. Indeed, it is a holy and wholesome thought that brings us together to celebrate the blessings and work of a noble priest.

May it please Your Excellencies, Reverend Fathers, and friends, to bear with me in this humble tribute to a cherished friend gone not from us, but before us. As long as the human heart remains true to the instincts implanted there by the Almighty Creator, it will be natural to love our friends and benefactors in life; and when life departs, to enshrine their memory. Even the pagans did this. In the darkest intervals of history the Greeks, Macedonians and Egyptians paid great honor to their dead.

How appropriate then to commemorate with ceremonies our dearly beloved friends. How beautiful at St. Basil's Church, a sanctuary of God's House to place therein a plaque to memorialize the priest daring enough to dream, and bring to reality, such a magnificent edifice. One might apply the words of the Prophet Ezechiel to this Pastor of souls: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel; and thou shalt hear the word out of My mouth, and shalt tell it them from Me." These words bespeak the priestly life and the message of him whom we honor today.

When Benjamin Hawkes was brought to the Church for Baptism, his sponsors in his behalf made an act of faith which he repeated throughout his life. We might say "a sixth sense" enabled him throughout life to "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (2 Cor 4:18)

Of his childhood and boyhood nothing need be said except that he came from a race of people to whom the things of eternity are more real than the things that appear. The memory of his parents was very much bound up in lasting gratitude.

After successfully completing his years of study he entered the business world where many alluring walks of life opened up their vistas before him. But once he heard the invitation of his Divine Master: "If thou wilt be perfect...come follow Me." (Matt. 19:21) The flame of that holy ideal

became the absorbing interest of his young life culminating as it did on Ordination Day when all the powers of mind and body were consecrated to the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

My dear friends, it is difficult for any of us to realize the sacredness of Holy Orders. You know, of course, something of the demands, the self-denial and mortification that must characterize the Catholic priest. "If any man will come after Me," says Jesus, "let him take up his cross and follow Me." (Matt. 16:24) What precious gifts are bestowed upon the new priest at the hands of the Bishop, a successor of the Apostles. Our Faith inspires us to reverence and venerate the priests of the New Covenant, who are by vocation, vow, and Divine Command, God's agents and representatives, "Ambassadors of Christ," and, "the salt of the earth."

Fortified with these sublime prerogatives, and fired with zeal for souls, souls, Father Hawkes set forth wherever obedience placed him. There at St. Michael's Church in Los Angeles, under the watchful eye of the gentle and scholarly Father Michael Lee, he began his priestly ministry. Certainly the parish patron, the Archangel Michael, kept a close eye on the young priest as he grew in wisdom and grace. In his second year in the parish there occurred the event which was to change his entire priestly life. The Archbishop of Los Angeles came to visit. After talking with the esteemed Pastor, Father Lee, Archbishop McIntyre asked Father Hawkes to come to his office. Shortly thereafter Father was appointed Secretary to the Archbishop. Thus was begun a career in the Church which brought together two men who have left their mark on the Church here in Los Angeles, and our country, for years to come. Together they built upon the foundations laid by those stalwart men and women who preceded them. For the long years of Cardinal McIntyre's tenure as Archbishop, and those of Cardinal Manning, Monsignor labored at their side. Truly did Benjamin Hawkes live up to the promise he made on Ordination Day: to serve God in the person of lawful authority. His unflinching loyalty and devotion to the priesthood, the Holy Father, and his Archbishop, shall always be for me one of the greatest strengths I have in keeping the Faith, and "fighting the good fight."

Truly it can be said of our lamented Monsignor, "Master, thou didst hand me over five talents; behold I have gained five others in addition... Well done good and faithful servant; because thou has been faithful over a few things I will place thee over many; enter into the joy of the Master." (Matt. 25:20,21)

For long years we have been witnesses of his fruitful ministry, of his humility and fervor in offering the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass. We marveled at how, after long hours of work, he kept vigil in the confessional where mercy and hope abound, and where the penitent found grace to be reconciled to God. In each priestly function, whether at a marriage feast, or at the bedside of the dying, his presence brought peace and inspiration for better things. Whence came this boundless energy, this power of a keen mind? It came from the love of God, of people, and of the Church. St. Bonaventure said, "The only way to judge a man's learning is by his knowledge of the love of God. No person who has not learned this fundamental truth, no matter how many other things he may know, can be considered wise."

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While mourning his passing, and extolling his quest for life, I cannot forget our discussions of our "sunset years." "Dan," he said, "Pray for me, as I will for you." "Have Masses offered asking God's mercy on our souls."

Thus our love for Monsignor Benjamin, our deep gratitude for his years of service will be proved by the number of Masses offered by us for the repose of his soul. Pray for him, he was our friend who asks of us the healing balm of our supplications. Let us listen to the words of Job: "Have pity on me, have pity on me at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me." (Job 19:21)

I thank you for allowing me to address you and to share the thoughts of my heart. You see, I believe I knew Monsignor Benjamin G. Hawkes, the warm person, a caring priest, a gentleman who made things happen, who never settled for seconds.

(Address given January 2, 1986, the feast of St. Basil, in the Sunset Room of the California Club, Los Angeles, California, by Sir Daniel J. Donohue, at a luncheon which took place after the blessing of the plaque memorializing the Rev. Msgr. Benjamin G. Hawkes, builder and pastor of St. Basil's Church, the blessing and the celebration of the Mass were by the Most Rev. Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles)